

51 Blunt's Hillock at Balaklava: Where did Nolan meet Lucan?

by Dr Douglas J. Austin 51 [TWC 34(2), p35 2017]

In 2006, I produced CWRS SP 33 '*Blunt Speaking : The Crimean War Reminiscences of John Elijah Blunt, Civilian Interpreter*'. From page 27, I quote Blunt's words:- "After delivering a message to the Pasha, I followed Lord Lucan and some of his Staff to a small hillock between redoubts No. 4 and No. 5 from where we saw the Guards and other Regiments descending from Sebastopol plateau into the plain. As most of the Staff had been sent with orders to the Cavalry Brigades, only the Second Aide-de-Camp (Captain the Honourable Charteris), myself and an Orderly remained with Lord Lucan, when shortly after Captain Nolan rode up close to his Lordship, saluted and delivered to him a written order from Lord Raglan." [*I note that that orderly was very probably TM Henry Joy (17th Lancers).*] In my article "*Nolan at Balaklava: Part V: New Evidence and New Belief*", which appeared in This Journal, 26(4), 14-22, (2009), I wrote "I must stress that Nolan reportedly offered to join the Cavalry advance as a guide and may have been specifically authorised and instructed to do so. He rode down the face of the Sapoune Ridge and met Lucan on a small hillock between Redoubts 4 and 5, possibly near the present location of the British Balaklava Monument."

In late May 2008, I took a number of photographs from an estimated 14 feet above the platform of the Russian Memorial on Redoubt 4 at Balaklava. One (taken due West with 12x optical zoom) showed a plausible candidate for that 'small hillock' (see **Figure 1**). Subsequently, the back cover of This Journal for October, 2010, reproduced that image - together with one taken by Glenn Fisher, which showed me putting my life at risk...

I have used Professor Peter Guth's excellent MICRODEM (US Naval Academy) software (<http://www.usna.edu/Users/oceano/pguth/website/microdem/microdem.htm>) with Shuttle Radar Topographic Mission (SRTM 3-arc-second) data to visualise the 2002 landforms, profiles and lines-of-sight along and around the Causeway Heights. Given the clear-cut rise and fall of the vine-posts, not covered by vigorous plant growth in late May, **Figure 2** shows the existence of a modest swell of ground (BH) slightly to the south of the R5-R4 direct line and in a location apparently undisturbed by later ground works. BH is located at ca. 225 m (246 yd) from the R5 monument and ca. 629 m (688 yd) from the R4 memorial.

Figure 3 shows the contours around BH and the surface profiles towards the eastern end of the North Valley. Those profiles indicate that, from BH (at 2m above ground level), the northerly swell of R4 effectively blocks direct sight beyond 750 m (820 yd) in that direction - specifically including C (the location of the Russian Don No. 3 Heavy Battery). As a further check, **Figure 4** compares an edited Google Earth© image with the MICRODEM viewshed centred on BH. [A viewshed - a common function of most GIS (Geographic Information System) programs - is an area that is visible from a specific location.] The eastern end of the North Valley is not visible, while the Col near Balaklava certainly is visible from BH.

My analysis accords well with Dr David Jones's assessment in This Journal, 30(3), 34-40, (2012). While very suggestive, neither can be absolute proof that '*Blunt's Hillock*' has been identified. If that is the case, however, the question at once arises:- **Why would Lucan have been there?** I infer that from BH, Lucan had clear sight of Russian operations near and to the south of R1, R2 and R3. Equally, by moving a short distance to the north, he would have the North Valley in view. The specific immediacy of Raglan's 4th Order, vehemently urged by Nolan, appears to have prompted the undelayed dispatch of Cavalry Brigade elements into the North Valley killing ground. I acknowledge discussions and exchanges with Dr David Jones.



FIGURE 1

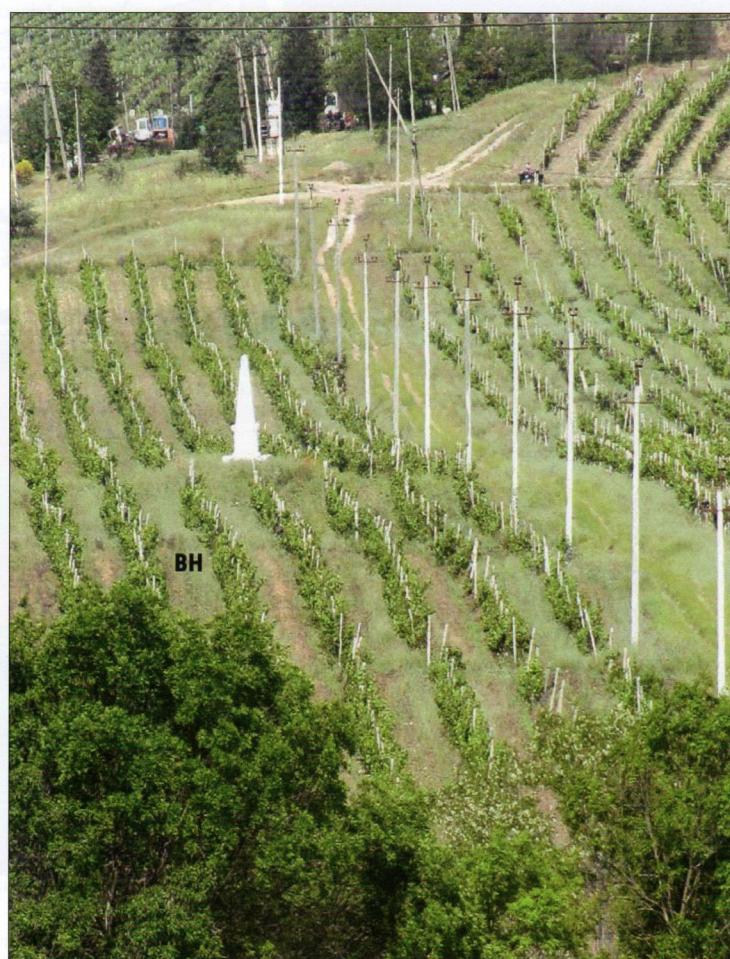


FIGURE 2

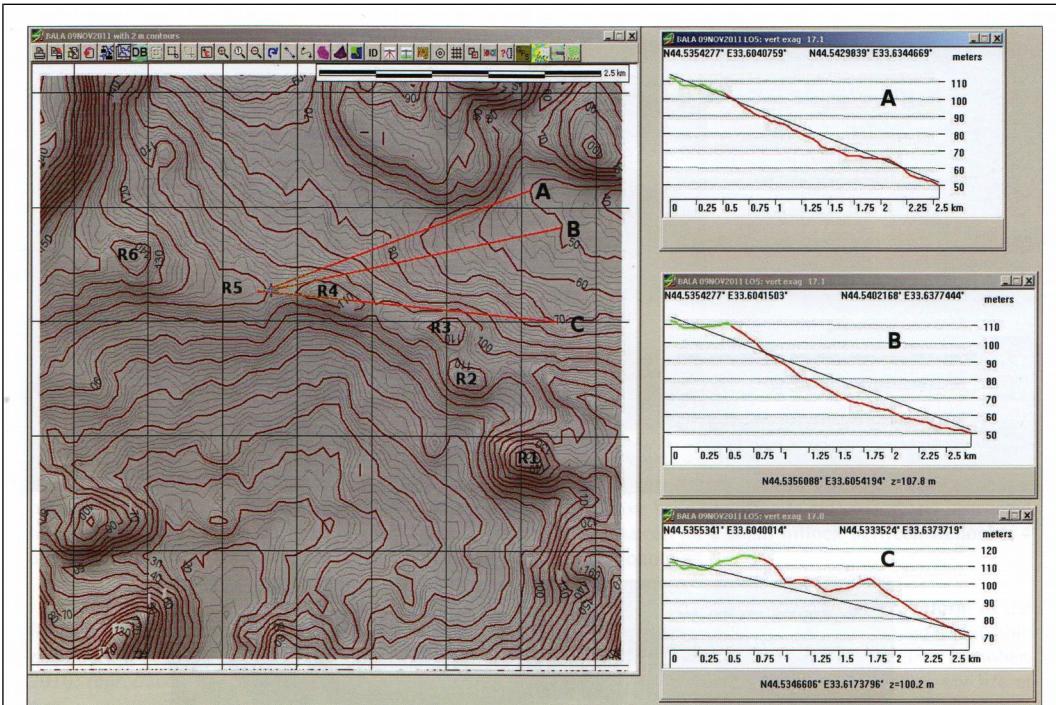


FIGURE 3

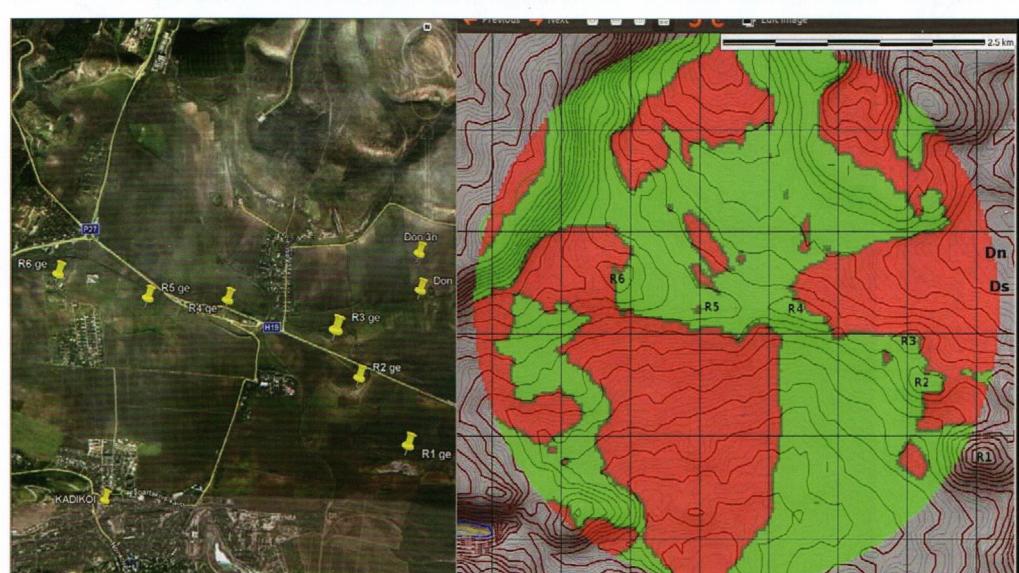


FIGURE 4